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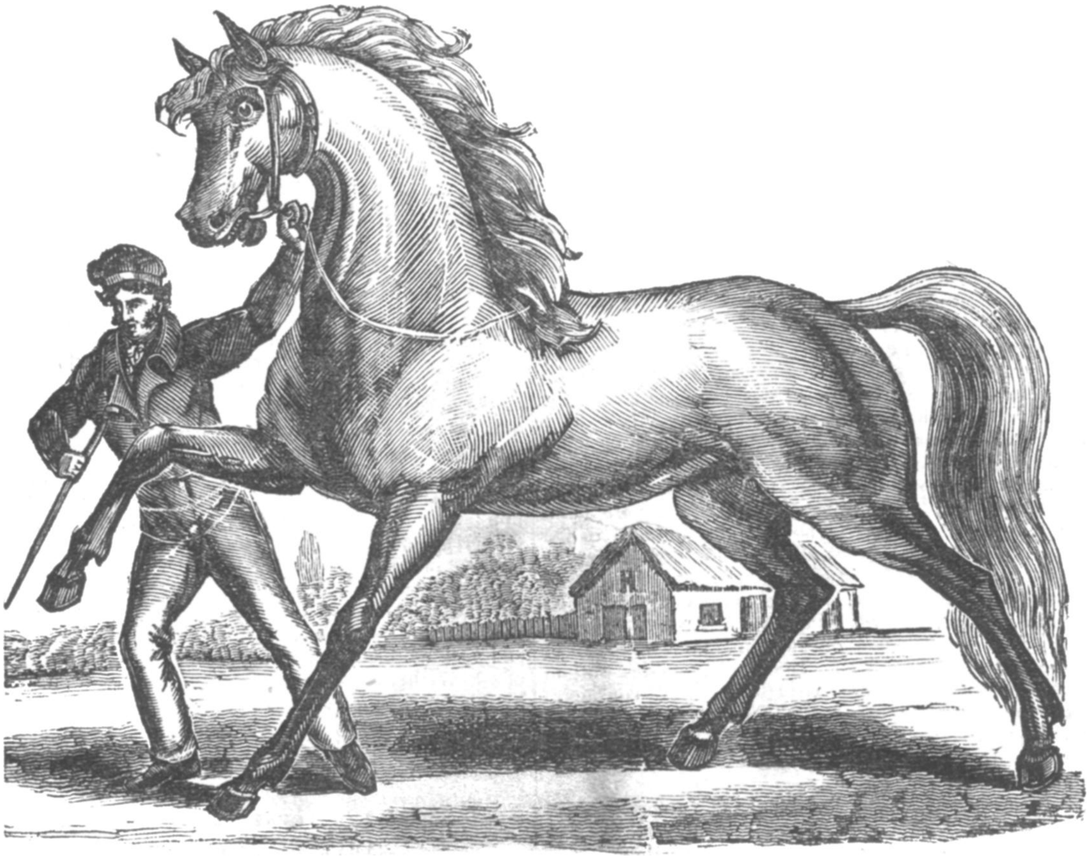

THE HORSE.

THE HORSE.

In our notices of animals, foreign and domestic, we should suppose that a few observations on that noble animal the Horse, will not be unacceptable to a large proportion of our readers. To enter into a minute detail of the many excellent properties possessed by the various breeds of horses, would lead us far beyond our space.

It has been remarked by an able writer, "that the breed of horses in Great Britain is as mixed as that of its inhabitants; the frequent introduction of foreign horses has given us a variety that no other single country can boast: most other countries producing only one kind; while ours, by a judicious mixture of the several species, by the happy difference of our soils, and by our superior skill in management, has brought each quality of this noble animal to the highest perfection. In the annals of Newmarket may be found instances of horses that have literally outstripped the wind. Childers is an amazing instance of rapidity; his speed having been more than once exerted equal to eighty-two feet and a half in a second, or nearly a mile in a minute. The species used in hunting is a happy combination of the racer with others superior in strength, but inferior in point of speed and lineage: a union of both is necessary; for the fatigues of the chase must be supported by the spirit of the one, as well as by the vigour of the other. No country can bring a parallel to the strength and size of our horses destined for the draught; or to the activity and strength united of those that form our cavalry. In the late campaigns, they showed, over those of our allies, as well as the French, a great superiority both of strength and activity; the enemy was broken through by the impetuous charge of our squadrons; when the German horses, from their great weight and inactive make, were unable to second our efforts. The increase of our inhabitants, and the extent of the manufactures of Britain, together with the former neglect of internal navigation to convey those manufactures, multiplied the number of horses; an excess of wealth, before unknown in these islands, increased the luxury of carriages, and added to the necessity of a culture of these animals: their high reputation abroad has also made them a branch of commerce, and proved another cause of their vast increase."

The following remarks, intended to guide the purchaser in the selection of the particular kind of animal he may require, are copied from a valuable little work, a second edition of which has recently been published.*

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* Advice to Purchasers of Horses. By J. Stewart, Veterinary Surgeon, and Professor of Veterinary Surgery in the Andersonian University. Glasgow: W. R. M'Phun.

" EXTERIOR CONFORMATION OF THE HORSE.

" There are some peculiarities in the form of the horse, which admirably fit him for one kind of work, but at the same time render him useless, or nearly so, for another. The racer, with his light airy form, delicate limbs, rapid movements, and fiery spirit, is eminently an animal of speed; but yoked to a heavy waggon along with a stout cart horse, he appears comparatively weak and worthless. Though one horse, from his conformation, is best fitted to carry, and another to draw, and another still to do both with decency, yet there are certain points, which it is desirable to have in all horses, for whatever work they may be designed. Such, for example, is a large nostril, which is a good quality in all, and does not, like some others, become a bad one, when the horse is applied to a different purpose. But then, it is one of far more consequence in a horse wanted for quick work, than one whose pace need never exceed a walk. In the one case, it is absolutely requisite, but in the other, is only a secondary consideration.

" The horse in most general use, is a compound of the speed of the racer and the power of the draught horse: and it is the different proportions in which these qualities exist, that make one a hunter, another a hackney, &c. To explain how a certain form makes one horse fleet, and another powerful, would, in most cases, lead to an anatomical consideration of the whole machine, so that in the majority of cases, I can only state the fact. The muscles are the organs of motion, and in proportion to their development the animal is strong; but the bones being the levers upon which the muscles act, that strength, and the horse's action, must be considerably increased or diminished, according as the bone they are attached to is longer or shorter than is usual. The strength is likewise much, and, generally speaking, the extent of action more, influenced, by the *position* of the bone, as in the case of the shoulder blade, which by being long, and slanting from the withers forwards and downwards, gives the horse extensive action as well as strength, while a more upright position (and if upright, it *must* be short likewise) of the same bone, confines the action of the whole limb, and reduces the power of the muscles. The bones, besides, sustain and give form to the whole structure, and add considerably to the weight: consequently their bulk in the draught horse is not a serious objection, for he does much of his work by throwing his weight into the collar, and as it were pushing it before him.

" Notwithstanding the importance of conformation, it is not all that is required. Experience reminds us, that many seemingly faultless animals have lamentably disappointed the expectations their figure had raised, while others, as insignificant in appearance as may be, have surprised good judges by their extraordinary and unlooked for performances. Hence, many horsemen exclaim, that 'there are good horses of all shapes. The fact is, a great deal depends on the quantum of nervous energy or 'bottom' which the animal possesses, and it is the union of this energy with good conformation that makes many horses invaluable. Its absence or presence, however, is not likely to be discovered by the purchaser, without a trial: and to avoid disappointment in this respect, it is therefore advisable to obtain one prior to purchase. The horse should be set to the work he will be called on to perform, and if he is intended for the saddle or single harness, he should have no companion on his trial, for many horses work well in company, that are downright sluggards when alone.

" Some horses have an unpleasant way of going, or are difficult to manage, or have some vice which is only displayed at work. These are so many more reasons for having a trial prior to striking a bargain. But if that cannot be obtained, some sort of conclusion regarding the animal's spirit may be drawn from his general appearance. The way he carries his head—his attention to surrounding objects—his gait—and the lively motion of his ears, may all or each be looked to as indicative of 'bottom' or willingness to work. It is only, however, in a private stable, or in that of a respectable dealer, that these *criteria* can be depended upon.

" In considering the conformation of the horse, it is convenient to divide him into Head and Neck, Trunk or Carcase, and Extremities, or the Hind and Fore Legs. Under these heads I shall note what are deemed the most essential points, and only those: for there can be no occasion for dilating upon the subject as is usual, when attention is directed to such trifles as, 'the ears should be well placed, small, pointed, erect, covered with thin skin, the eyelids thin, the muzzle thin, and well supported,' &c. Such an account might consistently close by saying, that the horse should have four feet as well as four legs. Until men can make horses as they say they *should* be, the purchaser must content himself if he gets one with those qualities which are most important in fitting him for his destined work, and whose general appearance will do his master no discredit.

" THE HEAD AND NECK.

" The head, as being a part not at all contributing to progression, should, in the saddle horse, be small, that it may be light—the nostrils expanded, to admit plenty of air, and the space between the branches of the lower jaw, called the channel, should be wide, that there may be plenty of room for the head of the windpipe. In the draught horse, a heavy head is not, as far as utility is concerned, an objection, for it enables him to throw some weight into the collar, and hence, excepting its ugliness, it is rather an advantage if he is used entirely for draught. But it makes the saddle horse bear heavy on the hand of the rider, makes him liable to stumble, and, when placed at the end of a long neck, is apt to wear out the four feet and legs by its great weight. The neck of the saddle horse should be thin, not too much arched, and rather short than long, for the same reason that the head should be light: and in the draught horse, it may be thick, stallion-like, and sufficiently long to afford plenty of room for the collar, and for the same reason that the head may be large in this animal. The windpipe should be large, and standing well out from the neck, that the air may have an easy passage to and from the lungs. The horse used for both carrying and drawing, should have a head and neck neither too light nor too heavy. The advantage of a heavy head and neck to a draught horse, is illustrated by the practice of some carters putting a boy on the shoulder of a horse, when starting a load in deep ground. By enabling him to throw the boy's weight besides his own into the collar, it assists him materially.

" THE TRUNK OR CARCASE.

" That the saddle horse may be safe and have extensive action, it is necessary that the withers be high. This advantage is indicated by the horse standing well up before; and it is usual in showing a horse to exaggerate the height of the forehand, by making him stand with his fore feet on a somewhat elevated spot. A horse with low withers appears thick and cloddy about the shoulder. In the ass and mule, the withers are very low, and the shoulders very flat, and this is the reason why they are so unpleasant to ride, and why it is next to impossible to keep the saddle in its proper place without the aid of a crupper. High withers, however, are not essential to the racer or the draught horse. The former does all his work by leaps, and that is performed best when the horse stands somewhat higher behind than before: neither are high withers necessary to the draught horse: but in the roadster they are as important as the safety of the rider is, for a horse with a low forehand is easily thrown on his knees. In the draught horse, this tendency towards the ground is obviated by the support the collar affords.

" The *chest* should be deep and wide in all horses, but especially so in one intended for quick work, in order that there may be plenty of room for those important organs, the lungs. When the chest is deficient in capacity, the horse has neither strength nor endurance; and is in stable language termed 'washy.' Such horses have in general more fire than vigour, and being showy, may carry a lady well enough, but are comparatively worthless for effective service. A narrow chest is indicated by the fore legs standing close to each other.

" The *barrel* behind the girth should approach as nearly as may be to a cylindrical form, that there may be plenty of room for the digestive organs.

"The *back* should not be too long nor too short, for though length is favourable to an extended stride and rapid motion, yet it makes the horse weak, and unable either to draw or carry any considerable weight. On the other hand, if the back be too short, the horse's action must be confined, and short-backed horses in general make an unpleasant noise when trotting, by striking the shoe of the hind foot against the shoe of the fore one: and though they are in general very hardy, and capable of enduring much fatigue, and of living on but little food, yet a back of middling length is better by far than one immoderately short or long.

"The back should be nearly straight; when it is curved downwards, the horse is termed 'saddle-backed,' and though he is very easy to ride and pleasant in his pace, yet he is weak, and unable to carry a great weight. Sometimes, instead of being sunk, the spine is arched upwards, and the horse is said to be 'roach-backed.' He is the very reverse of the saddle-backed horse in every respect.

"The *croup*, or space between the termination of the loins and the root of the tail, should be considerable, and in a horse intended for quick work, it should run more in a horizontal than a perpendicular direction. In the Irish horse, this part is short, and instead of proceeding almost directly backwards, suddenly droops; and though such a conformation does not unfit him for trotting, or drawing, or even leaping, and is even an advantage for an upright leap, yet he cannot in the gallop compete with the English horse, whose croup is long, and very little inclined downwards.

"The *quarters* are never too extensive from before backwards, nor deep from above downward, nor are they ever too much spread out laterally. A great deal is done by the hind legs, and the quarters should in every case be as expanded and well furnished with muscles as possible. When the haunch bone projects more than usual, the horse is said to be 'ragged hipped,' and is commonly objected to for it. But as this bone, by spreading well out, affords plenty of room for the attachment of muscles, it cannot be said to be a fault. When it appears so, the loins are the seat of that fault. They are too narrow.

"THE FORE LEG.

"In the saddle horse, and where safety is desirable, the position of the fore leg is worthy of attention. It should be placed well forward, and descend perpendicularly to the ground, the toe being nearly in a line with the point of the shoulder. The pasterns should neither be turned in nor out. When they are turned inwards, the horse is in general very liable to cut the fetlock joint by striking the opposite foot against it. The draught horse may be excused though he leans a little over his fore legs, but the saddle horse will be apt to stumble if he does so.

"The *shoulder* should, like the hind quarter, be extensive, well covered with muscle, and in the saddle horse, where rapid and extensive action is required, it should slant from the withers to the breast. The neck should join the shoulder in such a manner as to seem to run into it. But the draught horse's shoulder should be, and usually is, more upright, that the collar may sit well upon it. The setting on of the neck is more distinct in the draught than in the saddle horse, the shoulder bone being more upright; and the muscles taking a different direction make the shoulder swell out abruptly, and form a seat upon which the collar conveniently rests.

"The *elbow* should be wide from before backwards—the space between it and the knee rather long, and well supplied with muscles—the knee should be broad from before backwards, and *straight*: when it is bent forward, the horse is said to be 'bent before,' and it is, in general, a symptom that he has endured some hard work, and his sure-footedness cannot be depended upon. When the knee is bent backwards, it is called a 'calf knee,' and though it is an ugly fault, I am not aware that it is any thing more, although it is possible there may be a little loss of power in the muscles that bend it. Below the knee the leg should be fine, and flat in back and front, and broad from before backwards. The back tendons should stand equally well out from the knee to the fetlock.

"The *pasterns* in the very heavy draught horse, are, in general, short and nearly upright: and it is necessary that they should be so, in order to uphold his huge frame; but in the racer, they are long and slanting, in order that, by giving way at every step of the animal, the shock accompanying rapid motion may be destroyed. The purchaser must, therefore, look for a horse, whose pasterns have the proper degree of obliquity for the purpose the horse is to be used for. If the pastern be too long, the leg is very liable to strain, and even the horse to break down when urged to the top of his speed. If it be too upright, the action of the horse is *stilty*, and very unpleasant to the rider. And besides that, such horses are, from the concussion they are liable to, very subject to diseases of the bones below the knee, such as ring bones, splints, &c.

"The *foot* should be as nearly round as possible, smooth, and displaying no signs of brittleness by pieces being broken and chipped off by the nails; the sole should be but moderately concave; when flat it is objectionable, and particularly so in the heavy, high actioned horse, for there is then a probability of its becoming convex.

"THE HIND LEG.

"I have already spoken of the quarter. The part between the stifle and hock joint, commonly called the thigh, should be long, and, above all, supplied with abundance of muscle.

The *hock* should be broad from before backwards, because when it is so, it shows that a lever (the point of the hock) is long, and, consequently, the muscles that act upon it will have more power to extend the leg. And as it is by the extension of the leg that the animal is projected in the gallop and leap, it is of importance that the hock be broad, and the point projecting backward, in the horse wanted for quick work. The hock should likewise in the same animal be well bent under him. When the hocks lean towards each other, the horse is said to be 'cat-hammed,' or 'cow-hocked.' It is most common in ponies; but setting aside its ugliness, it is not a serious defect: indeed it is commonly thought to make the animal a good trotter. It is certain, that a hock bent outwards is more objectionable, for the weight of the carcase is then like a person placed between two stools. Below the hock, the back tendons and the pasterns should be the same as in the fore leg.

"Short as this account of the conformation of the horse is, it might have been still shorter, for it is a fact, that the existence of one good point is in general sufficient to ensure the possession of another or others. A good shoulder, for instance, rarely goes without good withers, a deep chest, and a well-turned fore leg: but as it sometimes does, I have briefly particularised all that is commonly deemed most essential in the formation of a good useful horse."

THE CHIMNEY SWALLOW.

The following curious account of a settlement of Chimney Swallows, we extract from "An Account of the Habits of the Birds of the United States," by J. Audubon, recently published:

"Immediately after my arrival at Louisville, in the State of Kentucky, I became acquainted with the hospitable and amiable Major William Croghan, and his family. While talking one day about birds, he asked me if I had seen the trees in which the swallows were supposed to spend the winter, but which they only entered, he said, for the purpose of roosting. Answering in the affirmative, I was informed that on my way back to town, there was a tree remarkable on account of the immense numbers that resorted to it, and the place in which it stood was described to me. I found it to be a sycamore, nearly destitute of branches, sixty or seventy feet high, between seven and eight feet in diameter at the base, and about five for the distance of forty feet up, where the stump of a broken hollowed branch, about two feet in diameter, made out from the main stem. This was the place at which the swallows entered. On closely examining the tree, I found